Betty Ross is a retired occupational therapist who taught her patients the therapeutic value of writing and journaling. She is a Milwaukee, Wisconsin native whose career took her to New York City and Florida. But when it came to breast cancer, she found herself in a truly new world.

“I’m strong. I help others. I worked with veterans for years, but when it came to the big ‘C,’ I couldn’t say everything on my mind to my family,” says Betty Ross. “But I could admit the real fear, the real emotional issues to my mentor, Sharon.”

Betty’s mentor, Sharon Lochinski, is a Milwaukee “girl,” too. Early on, she learned to accept help from others as well as stand on her own. Her father passed away when she was only 24 years old. Taking care of her mother and helping to run the family business came naturally.

Unfortunately, when Sharon was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003, she didn’t know about ABCD. “I was by myself and was preparing to throw my mother her 80th birthday party,” notes Sharon. The party was a huge success, but she remembers having to keep up her spirits without letting on to others—the party was just three weeks after her lumpectomy.

Knowing that having the support of someone who had “been there” would have made all the difference, Sharon trained as a mentor shortly after learning of ABCD.

Betty and Sharon’s mutually mischievous smiles and open hearts might convince you they’ve known each other for decades rather than a few years. Describing her mentor, Sharon, as “super cool,” Betty says that Sharon took the time to get to know her, listening closely to her concerns.

Through Sharon’s example, Betty came to understand that it doesn’t have to be your job to support someone; you don’t have to be family. “You just have to be like Sharon. She just wanted to help,” says Betty.